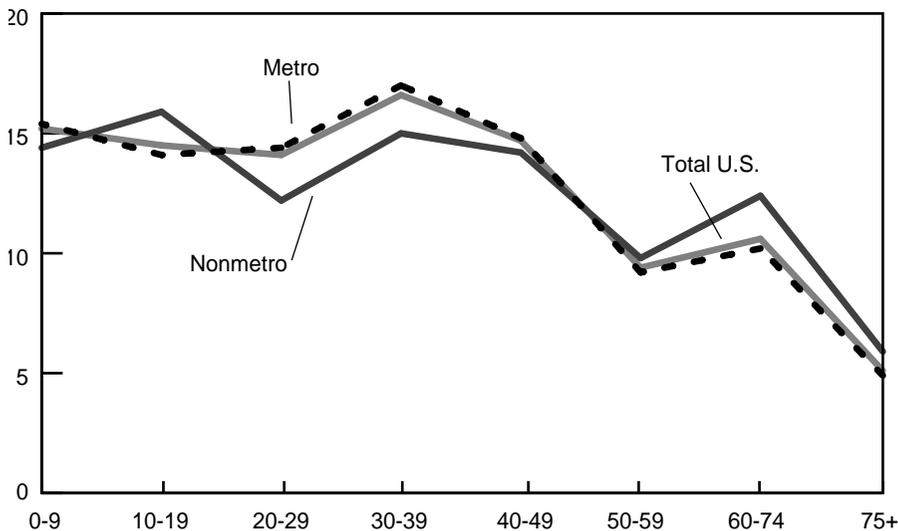


■ Age and Race

Age distributions reflect past demographic events (births, deaths, and migrations) and provide important clues about future changes in the labor supply and the demand for goods and services. The age distribution of the U.S. population is still dominated by the post-World War II rise in fertility rates known as the baby boom, whose members were born in 1946-64. From the time the youngest baby boomers

Figure 4-1.

Age distribution of U.S. Metro and Nonmetro population, 1996



graduated from high school and began their entry into the labor force in 1982 until the oldest members reach 65 in 2011, the United States has had and will continue to have a favorable balance of people in income-producing age groups. All parts of the country benefit from the current age structure.

A metro area, by definition, must have an urban nucleus of at least 50,000 people, and may include fringe counties that are linked to that nucleus because their workers commute to the central area. All other counties are nonmetro. Because of migration, which consists primarily of young adults and their children, metro areas captured a much higher percentage of the “baby boomers.” The higher metro percentage of working-age adults has been a persistent pattern for most of this century. Metro/nonmetro differences among the youngest and oldest have become increasingly large. In a reversal of previous trends, the birth rates in metro areas in the last 5 years have been greater than in nonmetro areas. In large measure, this reversal is due to the delayed childbearing among women in the large metro baby boom segment. Birth rates for nonmetro women are higher at younger ages, particularly for women in their twenties, an age group not well represented in nonmetro areas.

Increases in life expectancy over the past 50 years and the aging of the large population segment born in the 1920's increased the proportion of elderly between 1970 and 1990. The percentage of the population over age 75 rose dramatically, especially in nonmetro areas. Retirement migration to nonmetro areas, coupled with historically high levels of nonmetro outmigration of young adults and their children, placed a higher proportion of older people in nonmetro areas; the percentage of nonmetro population age 60 or older was 18 percent in 1996, compared with 15 percent in metro areas. For the first time since 1960, metro children under 10 outnumber metro preteens and teenagers. This is not true for nonmetro areas.

In 1990, 8.7 million nonmetro residents belonged to one of four minority groups: Blacks, Hispanics, Asians (including Pacific Islanders), and Native Americans. Blacks made up close to two-thirds of the nonmetro minority population in 1980, but their share declined as other groups grew much faster during the 1980's. Minorities constituted only 14 percent of the total nonmetro population in 1980, but they accounted for 50 percent of the people added during the 1980's. Their 15 percent rate of growth was more than five times the rate for Whites. For all minorities except Native Americans, however, growth rates were even higher in metro areas during the 1980's, so that the share of U.S. minorities living in nonmetro areas declined slightly from 16 to 14 percent. Minorities are still much more likely than Whites to live in metro areas, but their presence in nonmetro areas is increasing.

Table 4-1.

Nonmetro population by race and ethnicity, 1980-1990

<i>Race/ethnic group</i>	<i>Population</i>			<i>Share of U.S. population in nonmetro areas</i>		
	<i>1980</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>Change 1980-90</i>	<i>Change 1980-90</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1990</i>
	<i>Thousands</i>			<i>Percent</i>		
White	46,753	47,863	1,110	2.4	25.4	24.7
Minority	7,624	8,688	1,064	14.0	16.5	14.1
Black	4,770	4,923	153	3.2	18.0	16.4
Hispanic ¹	1,786	2,329	543	30.4	12.2	10.4
Native American ²	759	971	212	27.9	49.5	49.6
Asian	309	465	156	50.5	8.3	6.4

¹Hispanics can be of any race.

²Native Americans include American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts.

Source: 1980 and 1990 Censuses of Population.